

A
L E T T E R

F R O M

HUGH BORD, Esq;
of *BALLRCASTLE*,

T O A

Member of Parliament,

On the Late

SCARCITY of COALS

I N T H E

City of *DUBLIN*.

D U B L I N:

Printed in the Y E A R, 1749-50.

J. F. F. F.

F. R. M.

HUGH BOLD, Esq.

of BARNSTAPLE

TO A

Member of Parliament



SCARCE COALS

IN THE

City of DUBLIN

DUBLIN:

Printed in the Year 1749-50.

LETTER, &c.

SIR,

UPON hearing, in the Beginning of your Session, that a Committee was appointed to enquire into the State of the *Newry* Navigation and the Works here, I should have gone to Town, to have given a just Account of the Latter, but that I was then in a sharp Fit of the Gout, and though I have now recovered so far, I thank God, as to be able to stir Abroad, yet I still have an Eruption in one of my Legs, by the gouty Humour, which would make such a long Journey as from hence to *Dublin* hazardous and inconvenient for me; and my not being required by any Summons or Notice in Form, I concluded that several Gentlemen of Rank and Distinction, some of them Members of your House, whose Curiosity brought them last *August* and the Summer before to see what was done, and doing here, had represented the same in such a Light, as made my Attendance unnecessary.

But being sensibly affected with the Accounts I have of the high Prices and Scarcity of Coals in *Dublin* at this Time, when I have formed Works at very great Expence for delivering large Quantities, and have just now such store here on my banks as would give

great Relief in that Respect, had we Shipping and seasonable Weather to carry them to you, I beg leave to mention what appears to me to have been, and unless remedied, must continue to be the Causes of such Scarcity and of course high Prices at certain Times, and humbly to submit the following Hints to the consideration of your House and the City of *Dublin*, if you think them worth communicating, as the most likely Means that occur to me to prevent such for the Future.

It is obvious that a great Number of Coal-Works, as well as Hands to work them, and Ships to carry the Coals, are necessary to supply the Demands of the City of *Dublin* and the rest of this Kingdom, for all the Works on the River *Clyde*, at *Salt-Coats*, *Irwin*, *Air*, *Girvin*, &c. which extend about an hundred Miles on the western Coast of *Scotland*, and those at *Ellenfoot*, *Workington*, *Parton*, *Whitehaven* and *Flintshire* on the northwest Coast, and at *Milford*, *Swansey*, *Bury*, *Neath*, and so to *Bristol* on the western Coast of *England*, which are about one hundred and fifty Miles in extent, have scarce any other Market but *Ireland*, for what Coals they can spare above their own home Consumption; and I have Reason to believe that about five hundred sail of Ships, some of them large ones, belong to those Ports, which were for the most Part built or bought on Account of the Coal-Trade, notwithstanding which this Kingdom, the City of *Dublin* in particular, is often distressed for want of Firing in Winter, which is owing, in my Opinion, chiefly to the following Causes:

First, That when the Coal-Fleets come in Summer, the poor Tradesmen and Manufacturers not having Money or Places to buy and lay up Stores, and that Season not requiring much Firing, these Ships must lie long under their Cargoes, and at length sell them below their real Value to Coal-mongers, who yard them up with Views to get exorbitant Prices from the poor in Winter, insomuch that I have been well assured,

assured, (and I have taken Pains to examine into it) that such Fleets by lying long under their Cargoes and selling at so low Prices in the End, have not cleared three Shillings and Sixpence a Ton Freight, tho' they commonly sail their Ships from these Western Collieries cheaper, both as to Wages and Victuals, than from any other Part of *Britain*. This low Freight then, not bringing any proper Return to the Owners for the first Cost and Wear of their Ships, makes them quit their intended Trade, and take Freights to *Norway* and other Parts abroad : Then the few Ships that stay by the Trade make Reprisals, and manage so among themselves as to come but a few at a Time, by which they raise their Prices gradually 'till Winter ; and there being no Stores laid up, but in the Hands of oppressive Yard-keepers, these last join with the Ship Owners in Winter, and some say, pay them for to stay at Home until they raise their Coals to exorbitant Prices.

Secondly, In Time of War, or any extraordinary Emergency, that occasion Embargoes on Shipping, or impressing of Sailors, Freight and Wages rise greatly, and of Course the Price will necessarily rise higher upon Coals as well as upon all other Goods by Water Carriage ; and the Loss of a Number of small Vessels, during the late War occasions high Freights to those that remain, and I fear will continue so to do until others are purchased or built ; for I have earnestly endeavoured, from a Sense of my Obligations to the Publick, as well as to enlarge the Sale of my Coals, to get Ships to go upon Freight from hence to *Dublin* these two Years past, and would have paid them as high Freight as I did before there was a Safety for them here to lie in, notwithstanding which I could not prevail upon them, for they insisted upon two or three Shillings a Ton more, which I could not afford without raising the Coals to a higher Price in *Dublin* than I formerly sold at, and that I knew would

would expose me to publick Clamour if not Censure.

Thirdly, Were there great Plenty of Shipping and the Owners disposed to employ them upon reasonable Terms in the Coal Trade, yet if Stocks are not laid up in Summer for the Winter, it will too often happen that the City of *Dublin*, and the Kingdom in general must be distressed for Firing, which is so essential an Article to the well being of our Manufactures, as well as our poor Manufacturers; for contrary Winds or tempestuous Weather may prevent our being supplied, which I believe is partly the Cause of the Distress at this Time.

In Winter 1723, I went from hence to view the Coal Works in *Scotland* and at *Whitehaven*, in Hopes to get some Knowledge in the Business I then had embarked in, as well as Workmen to carry it on, and I found in both Places near an hundred Colliers laden, waiting for a Wind to carry them to *Dublin*; I went likewise to view other Works in *England*, and after spending about three Months, and returning by the *Head* to *Dublin*, I found myself there a Day or two before these Ships came in, so long had South-west Winds continued, by which the City was greatly distressed in respect to Firing; and even if it was a Coal Country along all this Coast from *Derry* to *Strangford*, the same Winds would prevent Ships from going from any Part of it to relieve *Dublin* with Firing; and the great Frost in 1739 having bound up all Ships in their Ports, equally distressed the City and most of the Kingdom in respect to Firing as well as Bread. I could mention more Instances but I think these and the recent one of this Season sufficient to shew the Necessity of our being more provident, and by some Oeconomy to provide the best Remedies our Circumstances and Situation will admit to prevent the like Distress for the Future.

And the First and main One I think of, is to have Yards in several Parts of the City of *Dublin*, and in other

other Sea-port Towns. In the Distress by the great Frost in 1739, I proposed the following Method of having them established in *Dublin*; that there should be one in every Parish of the City, which might be got at an easy Rent, with some little House upon it for the Persons to live in; to wit; one who should have the Charge of it as Clerk, and another under him as Porter to measure out the Coals; by which two decayed Parishioners that were esteemed honest and capable of giving Security for the faithful Discharge of their Trust, would have a reasonable Support by moderate Salaries, and the poor Tradesmen and Manufacturers of the Parish conveniently supplied almost at their Doors, whereas they now are obliged to travel, after they receive their Wages on *Saturday Night*, from the manufacturing Parts of the Town, as *Meath-Street*, the *Comb*, and the like, to the lower Quays, and as I have been told, very often have been seduced by some idle Person or other to spend the Money that should have paid for such Coals, by which their Family must starve thro' the Week following. This Circumstance, little as it may appear, I think deserves to be considered, and to me is a sufficient Answer to the Objection that I know will be made against the extraordinary Charge that so many Yards and Clerks will occasion, and much more so, when I regard the Charity of employing so many decayed Parishioners as above proposed.

These Yards being so provided, I proposed that the publick charitable Funds of each Parish, (and if I was right informed, there are none but what have more or less belonging to them) should be laid out to buy Coals for those Yards yearly, at the cheap Seasons, and sold out in Winter in Bushels and Pecks to the poor Inhabitants, so as to allow the legal Interest at least for the End those Charities were given, besides the first Cost of the Coals and all necessary Charges attending the Yard; and if any Parish has not at present, by their charitable Funds, sufficient to lay in a Stock of Coals necessary for the Inhabitants, I imagine

I imagine that many Men will think themselves as safe in laying out their Money at Interest on this Scheme, (as Coals are a ready Money Commodity and not perishable for the Time they are to lie on Hand as they would on Turn-pike Roads or the like, at less Interest, so that I doubt not but a Fund would soon be raised sufficient for the Purpose.

I suppose these charitable Funds are under the Direction of the Minister and Church Wardens of each Parish, and some other particular Persons, as the Lord Mayor, Archbishop, or other Persons of Station, as the Donors have appointed, if so, I think these Coal Yards should be continued under such Direction with four of the Parishioners, to be chosen as Assistants when the Church Wardens are chosen at Easter Vestry, to superintend the Management of the Fund in buying in the Coals, and taking the Cash and Accounts from the Clerk when sold out; two of which four Parishioners so chosen the first Year, to continue the second, with two new ones to be then chosen, and these last to continue another Year, and so on; by which there would still be two conversant in the Accounts of the Yard, and capable to settle those of the former Year at every Easter Vestry, as the Church Wardens settle theirs: By this Means I think there would be no probable Hazard of the Fund being impaired or embezzelled; and by this Scheme I hope there would be an Emulation in the Trustees of the different Parishes, who should manage most for the Advantage of their poor Neighbours, by buying in the best Coals, and upon the easiest Terms; and as it may be presumed these assistant Trustees would be often mercantile Men, their Knowledge in Trade would make them more capable to engage Ships to supply their Yards upon the easiest Terms at proper Seasons, and would choose to fix the Yards of each Parish as near the River as they conveniently could, and to buy Coals for the Parishes most distant from the lower Quays, out of the largest Ships, that must discharge however into Lighters, and carry them thro' the

the Bridges along each Side of the River, which would not only save an Expence in Carriage to the Yards, but likewise prevent the Inconvenience of a Number of irregular Carmen carrying such Quantities at one Time, (when a large Fleet came in) thro' the Body of the City.

If this Scheme, as to Parish Funds and Yards, shall not be approved of, or can't be readily brought into Execution, then I think the next Remedy is, that a Company by Charter should be erected, their Fund not to exceed such Sum as shall be thought sufficient for the Purpose of laying in a proper Stock of Coals upon the best Terms and at the cheapest Season, from all Collieries, and in such a Number of Yards as should be thought proper for accommodating the poor Tradesmen and Manufacturers in *Dublin*, as aforesaid; with like Powers to other trading Sea-port Towns to raise proper Funds suitable to their Demands; and the Fund to be subscribed for by such as are willing to become Members of said Company, to bear no more than an Interest of 5 or 6 per Cent. and not to be called out, only transferable by Debentures, to be struck for that Purpose, which Interest, first Cost of the Coals, Yard-Rents, Clerks and Porters Salaries, and all other necessary Charges being added, will determine the medium Price the Coals so laid in can be sold for, and that to be approved of by the chief Governor or Governors and Privy Council of the Kingdom every Year before said Yards shall be opened for the Winter's Sale, which Price is to stand thro' that Season: And as it is to be presumed that the Corporation and Citizens of *Dublin*, especially such Citizens as carry on large Manufactures, and wish to have their poor Manufacturers and Tradesmen comfortably supplied, will readily engage in such a Company; the Lord Mayor, Recorder and Sheriffs, with three of the senior Aldermen, to have Liberty to inspect into the Conduct of the Company, and the Clerks and other Officers employed under them, and into their Accounts, that they may remonstrate to the Government
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and Council, against any Misconduct which they shall observe in the Management of said Company or their Officers; and that proper Numbers of the Subscribers be chosen annually out of said Company, for Governors, deputy Governors, and a Committee to transact the Business of the following Year, of which a certain Number to be a Quorum.

It is the Interest of all the Proprietors of Collieries to sell as large Quantities of Coals as they can yearly, for their Expence of Salaries, keeping up their Engines, Levels, and main Passages under Ground, is much heavier upon small than it would be on large Quantities raised and sold; and if Coal-Works are not employed and wrought, they will soon become ruinous like an untenanted House, and the Workmen must either be kept employed or paid idle Wages, else they will go to other Works, for all which Reasons it is to be presumed, that every Coal Proprietor, even on the other Side of the Water, will discourage as far as he can, all Combinations among Masters and Owners of Ships, that may hinder the Sale of his Coals, and therefore will assist to the utmost of his Power the said Company, that they may be served upon reasonable Terms, and in the best Manner to have their Custom.

If this holds true with Respect to the other Side of the Water, it must do so much more in this: For my Part, as I have said already, I am sensible of my Obligations to the Publick, and thankful for them, tho' I can't help adding, that I have drudged heartily for above 29 Years in the Coal-Works and Harbour here, and have laid out a great deal of my private Fortune to make them as extensive and useful to the Publick as I could, by erecting a very large Water Engine, and opening new Works for delivering large Quantities, which I have now in such Order, that I only want Workmen; and for that End I went over to *Scotland* in Summer 1747, in hopes to have got a Number, imagining that several of their Works had been thrown idle by the Rebellion, but I was disappointed in that,
and

and am now giving Præmiums to my own Countrymen here to prevail upon them to work underGround. But all that will not avail, unless I get Shipping to carry off the Coals I raise, for I have every Season Coals lying above a Year upon my Banks, and as the Situation of them is such, that I cannot inclose Yards to hold my Coals, I have Quantities stolen and taken from my Banks by my Workmen and others: And for to encourage Shipping to come here I bought and built four within these ten Years, two of them large, one to bring Timber, and the other Rock-Salt, and to carry Coals to *Dublin*, all which Ships I have now lost, the largest of an hundred and twenty Tons, in *September* last, with a Cargo of Timber she had on board for the Harbour Work, which I have made more extensive than I proposed; and though I had a whole Summer's Work on one of my Piers torn down by the violent Storm that happened on the Fifth of *September*, 1747, I repaired it at a very extraordinary Expence, without ever making any Remonstrance to the Publick for these Damages, tho' no Allowance for Accidents or Losses of any Kind was made in the Computation laid before the House in 1743, which Particulars I only take leave to mention now as a Justification of my Conduct to your House, which I hope you will lay before the Committee that sits upon the Enquiry; and I beg leave to say, I am doing the utmost in my Power to make these Works answer the good Ends proposed: And I hope, by the Help of the *Tyrone* Collieries, which I am told are in a promising Way, that if we shall not be able to answer the Demands of the Kingdom, yet we shall be able so far to supply the Market as to regulate and keep down the Prices, unless prevented by contrary Winds, as hinted at before.

This last Point obliges me to mention an Observation I made in *May* last, when I went to view the *Kilkenny* Collieries, that if a Navigation can be made from them to *Ross* by the River *Barrow*, as I am told it may for a very moderate Expence. I think that
 should

should soon be carried on, as those Coals could be brought from *Ross* by the Winds which will obstruct the Navigation from our Northern, and the *English* or *Scotch* Collieries to *Dublin*.

If any publick Yards are set up upon either of the foregoing Schemes, or any other, I believe it will be advisable to consider whether any private Coalmongers should be allowed at all, or if allowed, that they should be put under proper Restrictions, for they generally combine with, and poison the Masters of Coal Ships to enhance their Prices.

I must beg leave to add one Thing yet, that if many more Collieries could be opened in *Ireland*, the Demand would still increase for Coals, as Manufactures depending on the Plenty and Cheapness of Firing would thereby be set on foot, of which there are many since I was concerned in this Colliery along the Coast from *Drogheda* to *Derry*.

If what I have said is intelligible and proves to be of any use to the Publick, it answers my Design, if it should not, I hope however for your Pardon, in giving you so much Trouble, as it proceeds from an honest well-meant Zeal in,

S I R,

Ballycastle, 9th March,
1749-50.

Your most obedient

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Hugh Boyd.

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